

Fraulein

By FRANK H. SWEET.

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WHEN the two so fond lovers were made quick into fairies' land by the beautiful white swan," concluded the tale told the children by the little German governess.

"It's a pretty story," said Della, "but not as nice as the one about the little wooden shoes, is it, Joe?"

"Yes," disagreed Joe, "better. The wooden shoe one chops off in the middle and doesn't end."

"But it might end some time, mightn't it, fraulein?" Della questioned earnestly.

"Ach, no—not until floats back the one shoe that was not more seen by the boy and girl playmates."

Fraulein Wilma Kraft was not lackadaisical. Her eyes were a cheerful blue and looked philosophically upon life as she found it; her face was like

a round, pinkly ripened peach, and her whole mouth had no pathetic tendencies; her waist was plump enough to discredit any suggestion of pinning, yet it seemed as if the buckle of the belt, fitting so trimly around it, creaked faintly—about as much as the extra strain of a sigh might occasion.

"I wish I had been the girl to go paddling barefoot in the rushes in the edge of the lake," Della looked with discontented eyes upon the fine kid that held in her rebellious toes. "What do you think became of the shoe that floated away, fraulein?"

"Ah, who could say that?"

"Well, I wish I could see a wooden shoe—I never did," Della mourned, with a dismally defrauded expression that turned fraulein's heart to wax.

"Tomorrow is the Saturday's holiday," she reminded. "Come you up to mein brutter's house once—ask the mutterkin—there haf I the one little shoe that the girl safed yet?"

"Goody!" rejoiced Della. "Mommy won't care. How did you get the shoe, fraulein?"

"Ask me not some questions and I tell you not some fips," said fraulein, laughing and springing suddenly up. "I must now absent me."

Going down the granite walk of the Stanhope grounds, Fraulein Wilma passed Miss Aurelia's new music teacher in the shadow of the winged griffin that snarled above the gateway. He was large, the professor, and ruddy cheeked; his hair, the color of a fresh pine shaving, hung straight to his ears and then curled under; his eyes shone amiably down under big round glasses.

Kindly Professor Yost could scarcely pass by a cow in unfriendly silence, much less a little rosy fraulein in the employ of his own patrons. A respectful "Gute efening," in broad, mellow German tones reached her sociable soul.

"Gute efening," she responded, with a quaintly distant courtesy, and went her way, dreaming absently of red clover patches and strong, shapely trees and tranquilly flowing water brooks, all because of the ruddy German with his mellow greeting.

Frau Lena Kraft scolded loudly about the prospective invasion of the Stanhope children on the next day.

"Children coming on the Saturday alretty," she protested shrilly. "They will the cleaning hinter and some mud on the clean floors make!"

Each Saturday it was the good frau's practice to so scrub and scour and splash and sluice the cottage that it was surprising there was a silver of woodwork left about it. And Wilma was not excused from sharing the household tasks in the face of the fact that she paid her board to her brother and his wife.

Lena was a thrifty soul and a driving one. "She pay fife tollar efery week? That make no different," would Lena asseverate.

"She will scour the tin ant the coffee kuchen bake ant make the socks mended."

So Wilma's opportunity for retrospect or day dream was narrowed to the darning hour, and even that Lena's sharp tongue oftentimes rendered stormy.

Herman, the slow, tranquil husband and brother, smoked his long stemmed pipe in unconcerned silence through Lena's brawlings, but occasionally he opened his mouth briefly and quenched her.

"Vat you make, Lena? Let the schil-dren coom," he said comfortably on this occasion.

And Lena submitted, though with much wasplike scolding and buzzing, to which Herman paid as little attention as to the rattling of a dry bean pod.

The birds among the trees in the quaint old Dutch yard of the Krafts opened their Saturday morning rehearsals unusually early in response to the sound of Frau Kraft's swishing, splashing, brooming and mopping begun in the rosy gray dawn, and the fraulein's faithfully burnished tinware flashed broken javelins to the rising sun. The good frau was still searching for undrenched corners and Wilma busy frying big round apple butter doughnuts when the young Stanhopes raced up the freshly reddened brick walk edged with blue flag clumps and a fringe of iad's love.

A dark presage of tracks, together with Wilma's desertion of the doughnuts to show the children the wooden shoe, set Lena buzzing like a red wasp.

When the fat little sabot, with its odd, curved toe and wide, flat heel, had been returned to the inner circle of Wilma's trunk and Joe and Della were hovering dangerously close to the pink knots of the sacred cleander.

Lena fell upon fraulein.

"Ach, himmel!" she scolded. "The house we must to the schil-dren gif yet—yess. Some tracks they make ant the blumen break—vat you care? Now, yust make on your ponnet once ant make dose schil-dren home—yess."

Fraulein found no hardship in compliance. Better the smell of dew wet earth than that of boiling lard; more congenial a crisp morning walk between strips of spangled grass than the monotonous forming of knobby fried cakes and the tireless refrain of Lena's pungent tongue.

The children skipped happily beside their little plump governess along the sleepy bystreet which ran suddenly out into the wide avenue where rose the griffin guarded gate. From the opposite side came Professor Yost, beaming rosyly, his sleek, pine shaving hued hair gleaming with the vigor of its recent brushing.

"Guten morgen," he greeted as the four reached the shadow of the griffin.

"Guten morgen," fraulein responded sedately, retreating gently. "Guteby, schil-dren. I must absent me."

The professor's eyes beamed commendingly after the fresh, starchy life calico of fraulein's disappearing house wrapper.

"Vas ist the little fraulein's name yet?" he asked the children, who went hopping before him like robins.

"Wilma Kraft," Della replied. "She's"—

"Vas?" The professor was standing stock still on the stone walk with his mouth open. "Vere lif she at, hey?"

"In the peaky little house down the next street that looks like mamma's Swiss music box. It's got little bits of window panes, with big red cleanders standing in front. And there's candlesticks and blue plates in a long row on the shelf, and fraulein has a wooden shoe in her trunk!"

"Wooden shoe?" the professor repeated.

"Yes, a stumpy little Dutch wooden shoe," Della babbled on. "She told us a story about it. A German boy and a German girl used to play together beside a lake and sail the girl's wooden shoes for boats, and once one shoe floated away, and they couldn't tell where it went. They paddled and paddled in the edge of the water in their bare feet and sailed out on a raft to find it, and they could not. The girl cried because she was afraid her papa would not buy her any more shoes, and she kept the one shoe to remind her what a nice time she had playing with the boy, for her papa and mamma moved away, and she never saw him again, but she never forgot him. Why, professor, where are you running off to? Weren't you going to give Reelle her music lesson?"

The visit of the young Stanhopes and the delayed frying of the doughnuts soured Lena for the day. She scolded Wilma roundly for both happenings and made a clean job while she was about it by berating her for all the shortcomings she could rake out of the dim past and saddle upon the plump shoulders of her sister-in-law.

Patently the fraulein bore the stings and arrows of her relative's tongue. Lena was much the elder, and Wilma seldom talked back. With serene forehead and blue, unclouded eyes she trotted about at her task amid a whirlwind of shrill reproach and blunt sarcasm. In her sturdy German mechanism there was no place for hysterical nervous-

And still she was a human little person, with warm blood and an inheritance of sentiment throbbing deep in her sensible bosom. She was glad when the apple butter cakes in their knobby rotundity and the sheets of cinnamon sprinkled coffee kuchen for the Sunday breakfast were set away.

In company with Lena's feather bed, like leaves of bread, and she could sit near the green paper shaded window in the sitting room and see the oleanders and durn in peace.

Over the plump pink fingers of her left hand she drew a big yarn sock and set to weaving a blue latticework across the grinning hole, wondering in a patiently tranquil way if there might ever be a loophole of escape for her from Lena's perpetual driving and scolding. Her brother Herman had one time given her the practical counsel:

"You should get married once."

And Otto Boppert, the prosperous barber on the next block, stood ready to assist her in carrying out the suggestion. Fraulein was studying about Otto now. Otto was short, but very wide. His hands were fat and moist and always smelled of coconut oil soap. His face was red and glistening, as if he had but just been dipped from the lard kettle. He laughed in a puffy way, which gave the impression that he was stuffed full of feathers, and he never seemed to think about much besides customers and earnings. Maybe some time she would not mind those things, but now, just after meeting Professor Yost—

Again Wilma's belt buckle creaked. Presently a good round knock at the entry door roared its way through the faint spluttering sounds from the kitchen, where Lena was scouring the flour barrel and slop pail.

"Petters!" thought fraulein, going tranquilly on with her blue weltage as Lena's fat shoes slapped belligerently forward.

As the door opened she heard the fresh, wholesome voice of the "Guten morgen." "Ogskoose—if the Fraulein Wilma Kraft lif heer yet?"

"Ach, ja," Lena's shrill tones responded. "You should talk in, once."

And into the sitting room walked Professor Yost, broad, ruddy and smiling cheerfully. He carried a small parcel wrapped in brown paper, which he proceeded silently to unroll. Then he held out upon his broad palm a little wooden shoe.

"Wilma"—he retreated from the pitfalls of his acquired English to the old, deep music of the tongue of his fathers—"dost thou remember Wendolen Yost, thy playmate, the boy who sailed with thee the little wooden shoes upon the lake? Yes? And the one little shoe that sailed away and was lost? But, no, little playmate; it was not lost. It floated to the island and caught fast in the reeds, and one day after the girl playmate was gone the boy found it there and tenderly carried it ashore. And the boy kept it for love of his girl playmate—the pretty little wooden shoe. Now, see, my Wilma, if I speak not the truth, for here is the girl's name carved into the little sole—'Wilma Kraft'—and the date the boy found it in the reeds. He carved them so. Hast thou been waiting these years, little Wilma, for thy playmate lover? Let us wait no longer, my beloved. We have found each other."

A Plute Indian Myth. The Plute Indian myth of the sun, moon and stars is as crudely anthropomorphic as can be found in any savage belief. The moon is the sun's wife. The stars are his children. When he appears the children skedaddle. They live in terror of him. He eats them when he can catch them. His stomach—the only part of him one can see—is stuffed with stars. When he goes to bed the children emerge again from their hiding places in the blue. The moon is fond of her children, who smile as she moves among them. Every month she goes into mourning because her cannibal husband has eaten one of them. The Plute Indians account for the appearance of a comet by stating that the sun often snaps at one of the stars, his children, and does not get hold of it—he only tears a piece out—and the star, getting wild with pain, goes flying across the sky with a great spout of blood flowing from it. It is then very much afraid, and as it flies it always keeps its head turned to watch the sun, its father, and never turns its face away from him until it is far out of his reach.

Must Have Had Experience. "Never mind, dear," he said reassuringly as she raised her sweet face from his shoulder and they both saw the white blur on his coat: "it will all brush off."

"Oh, Charlie," she burst out, sobbing, hiding her face again upon his whitey shoulder, "how do you know?"—Somerville Journal.

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